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A vicar as vagrant

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# A VICAR AS VAGRANT

By  
REV. GEORGE Z. EDWARDS, M.A.  
Vicar of Crossens

With an INTRODUCTION by  
REV. CANON DENTON THOMPSON, M.A.  
Rector of Birmingham

PRICE TWOPENCE

LONDON  
P. S. KING & SON  
ORCHARD HOUSE  
WESTMINSTER  
1910

# A VICAR AS VAGRANT

BY

REV. GEORGE Z. EDWARDS, M.A.

VICAR OF CROSSENS, SOUTHPORT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

REV. CANON DENTON THOMPSON, M.A.

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## INTRODUCTION.

It is with much pleasure that I accede to the wish of my friend and former colleague and write a few words of introduction to the following pages, which it is needless to say I have read with great interest.

They record an almost unique experience of one who, with a view to increasing his knowledge of and his sympathy with the vagrant class, joined their ranks and became himself for a few days a tramp. It is only by such testimony that we can fully inform ourselves of the privations and sufferings, the degradation and misery which are incident to the lot of those who constitute this human wreckage in our midst. That there is urgent need for a more widespread information on this and other phases of the social problem is painfully evident by the astounding ignorance which prevails even amongst good and well-meaning people on the subject. How few there are who realise that one-tenth of the population, numbering over three millions, are "submerged" in a physical and moral morass, while on its verge millions more are struggling for the bare necessities of life, and, alas! in many cases struggling in vain, only to find themselves slipping into the abyss from which they would fain escape. The peril to the nation of this spreading morass is far greater than many suppose, affecting as it does every grade of society up from the lowest to the highest, while the groans of those engulfed are both an appeal and a challenge to the Church. It is my earnest hope that the reading of these pages will awaken and develop in every heart the sympathy of Christ, that sympathy which in His name and for His sake cannot but express itself in some effort to succour the weak, upraise the fallen, and rescue the perishing. None can, I think, deny that the problems of the unemployed, or the greater problem of the unemployable, are full of difficulty, and that they are the resultant of many co-operating causes. While I, for one, do not believe that their solution will be found in any single proposal for reform out of the many now being pressed upon the public conscience, I cannot admit that these facts afford any excuse for the widespread indifference on the part of many Churchmen to the deplorable condition in which millions of our fellow countrymen are living and apparently doomed to die. That the Spirit of God may arouse and inspire the Church to and with a sense of its duty in this respect is my daily prayer.

J. DENTON THOMPSON.

THE RECTORY,  
BIRMINGHAM,

## A VICAR AS VAGRANT.

### A PARSON GOES ON TRAMP TO SEE.

I AM a parson—but, I trust, also a man. I believe I am truly called to tell other men what they are, Who calls them to their works, and what strength they have for fulfilling their works.

But I have found it almost impossible to tell a man that he is God's child, that God is his Father and will care for him and give him strength to do what is right, when that man is out of work, his children starved with hunger and pinched with cold, and his home almost gone.

For I know that what that man needs is food, warmth, and work; and I know he cannot get food and warmth without work. How can I tell him of God? How can I tell him that God calls him? that God will forgive his sins, and give him strength for his duty, if I cannot give him work?

It is sheer cant to talk to men of their souls when it is their bodies which first need care.

Can a man be honest without work? Can a man be full of joy, love, and peace without warmth, food, and clothing? Can a man see his loved ones suffer—suffer so much!—without feeling savage, mad against that society which, by its callousness and indifference, has denied to him his rights of brotherhood and manhood too?

I will not talk cant. I will not evade my duty of loving, serving, befriending my brother by talking of God's love, of God's care, of God's home, when my first duty as a member of a great Christian nation is to see he has a home, a true home of his own.

So, for many a year I have wanted to feel the pinch of necessity, of need, of cold, of hunger, of being an outcast from society, that I, who am a parson, may be able to speak with more authority and conviction of the needs of my outcast brothers, and to urge upon all who have any power and authority the duty and necessity of social study and reform.

It was in the dark of an April morning in the year of our Lord 1910, when I set out disguised as a tramp.

My companion knew the road, the ways of the road, and the people of the road; for had he not of necessity spent many a month out of work, hungry, clammed to death on the road? He was a strong, powerful, well-built fellow, who could turn his hand to many a different job, any kind of farm work, carting, management of horses and cattle. He was, moreover, a good striker at smithy work, and could make many a thing in wire-working, such as toasting forks, flue brushes, photo stands, pan wires, and gridirons. He was also almost a professional boxer, pugilist, or rough-and-tumble fighter.

He was only 21, but had known more of the ups and downs of life than most. I felt more than safe in his care in whatever rough and wicked company we got. He was trustworthy—a true mate. I knew also that he was willing to take me, because he wanted me to be able to warn young men from taking to the road themselves.

As we left Southport we met six men who had spent the night on the road—six men forced to spend the night out on one road into Southport in the cold frosty weather of early April, who had probably been without food most, if not all, of the day before!

Before eight o'clock we had tramped through Ormskirk, and were soon well on our way towards Wigan, where we found our way to a common lodging-house—kip-house or doss-house—in which we thought we might be able to sit down and make ourselves a meal before tramping on.

Bread and cheese and a big bowlful of tea—no milk—was our fare, at the cost of 4½d. for the two of us. Three or four of the dozen men in the kitchen were already drunk at that early hour, 12 noon. But my mate reminded me that it was pension day—the merriest day in the quarter for many a tramp.

We hoped to get to Manchester that night, but after struggling on for some three or four hours more, through Abram, Leigh, Atherton, Tyldesley, nearly to Worsley, we sat down on a roadside seat for ten minutes to rest. But, fatal rest! When I got up I could not stand upright! I could not take a step without great difficulty, and it was quite impossible to stride—so stiff and footsore had I become.

Then it was that I learnt how men begin to beg. I had not a penny in my pocket, and I knew then that, if I had been alone, I could have gone to the nearest door to beg, nay, almost demand, some hot tea or some hot drink to quench my thirst, and also to entreat for money for a night's lodging.

Most men will not beg until forced by hunger or pain to do

so, but once having learnt to beg, once having found out he can get relief and help for the asking, there is the tremendous danger of all too easily becoming little by little the professional beggar, unashamed, who, in a few short years, will laugh to scorn the offer of the work which once he would have held to be the greatest boon.

So, thoroughly exhausted after a thirty-three miles walk, we got into a tramcar to fare to the centre of Manchester. For the remainder of our tour, during the whole of which I was eating very little but dry bread, I was tired out and somewhat in that state of body which all *beginners* on the road must experience.

We spent four days on the road as tramps, stopping each night at common lodging-houses, and tramping on the following day, often visiting doss-houses in the towns we passed through. We went from Manchester through Middleton to Rochdale, through Bury to Bolton, and through Chorley to Preston, and thence by train back to Crossens. The doss-houses at which we stayed, and which we visited, were in no way exceptional in their character, except, I hope, the "Penny Sit Up." Some were well conducted, others very much the reverse.

I now want to make men understand—what I have vividly learnt—that the stream of destitution on the road is continually recruited from young men—young men who, seeking work and finding none, become exhausted and penniless. Hunger, cold, and misery quickly drive them either to beg or to steal. In one of these ways they gather pence enough for the poor food and squalid shelter of the common lodging-house. Once there, they all too surely sink to the level of their companions and remain on the road for ever.

#### THE COMMON LODGING-HOUSE.

We were tramps. My mate had just a few shillings in his pocket, so, hungry, footsore, and exhausted, we made our way to one of the large Manchester doss-houses. We entered the long darkly-lit room (all doss-house rooms seem darkly-lit) in which at that early hour of 5 p.m. there were already gathered about 200 men. Some in groups chatting and talking together; some busily getting their evening meal; some sitting tired out and miserable in their rags; and most of them keenly eyeing any stranger up and down.

The central point of attraction in a doss-house is the cooking stove—for is that not the source of a glowing

delicious heat? The centre of a fragrant mixture of appetising smells? Of bacon and eggs, of herring and chop, and of many another morsel crackling and frizzling each in its frying pan? The stove is generally a well-built glazed brick construction, coming right out into the room ten feet or more, with the fire at the end, and with some four or five feet width of a flat iron top, often quite red hot; also several large boilers from which boiling water can be drawn to make tea, and, overhead, a smoke and fume collector with racks for drying clothes. There are a number of frying pans, teapots or mugs, and big bowls—once enamelled—belonging to the doss-house. You look around the tables, take up a mug and bowl that are not being used, wash them at the tap—no soap is provided—and brew your own tea, and if lucky enough to have a rasher of bacon for your meal you reach down a frying pan to begin the frizzling process, but mind you watch it well, lest, whilst you turn to make your tea or go to the counter to buy your pennyworth of bread, one cleverer than you cracks a couple of eggs in your pan over your bacon and curses you if you dare to touch his stuff!

For in this, the casual labourer's wretched substitute for home, you are surrounded by thieves and pickpockets, most of whom work in gangs, and will fight for each other in a row, in which you, a stranger, will have no chance whatever of redress.

But remember, this is *Home*, the only home to hundreds of thousands of our English lads! What is the charm of your home? A loving greeting from a loving wife, and bonnie bairnies too. A little corner all your own. A place of peace and of refreshment, and of the delicious rest to weary limbs and tired brain of a clean sweet bed.

No welcome greeting to the inmate of the doss-house; no little corner all his own; no peace or spiritual refreshment here, and, most certainly no clean sweet bed! What a mockery of home! Truly England's greatest need is homes.

In the doss-house you eat in public; you wash in public; you sleep in public; you dress in public; and this always, whether you are well or ill.

You may be molested the first hour you enter; these men of the roads are used to fighting, brawling and stealing—it is their ordinary life—and they can most easily involve you, force you, into a fight or brawl if they want. You are never safe from the insults of the drunkard, or the fingers of the thief, either by night or by day.

If you linger here many days, and especially if you are a greenhorn, you must become dirty. You will feel yourself growing dirty in body, and dirty in mind and soul. There is a sort of rough "sweep-up" cleanliness, but how can the doss-house keeper keep his beds clean? The filthiest old wreck on the road may have slept between the same sheets the night before, and what does he leave behind him? True, you can wash your shirt and hang it over the stove, and watch it while it dries. Mind you watch it well! But you can't wash your trousers. Your washing, wash you ever so carefully, will never kill what may be multiplying there.

Your companions, too. You look at them; you ask about them; speak to them; who are they? Many of England's cleverest tradesmen are here; artisans and workmen of every sort—bricklayers, painters, joiners, plumbers, engineers, navvies and labourers as well. Through falling out of work, from misery, from drink, they first took to the road—they have now grown used to it; they have fallen so low, nobody cares, so there they will stop! They have become "content in their nast."

But lower still, you are surrounded on every hand by mouchers (professional beggars) and by thieves. These men in the main set the tone and spirit in all the thousands of common lodging-houses in the land. Their talk is about "marks," and the best houses on the road at which to beg. How "to pull a toff up" and tell him a good tale. (Truth is a forgotten language here.) How they fared in gaol; for most of these men have been in gaol, and come out with all the natural fear and dread of gaol gone for ever! And every tale they tell, and every sentence they utter, has its savour, its oath, its curse, or its blasphemy. Yet once they were not thus; *once* they shuddered at the thought of being such, as they felt themselves drifting down, and no one stretched out a hand to help.

But yet, lowest of all, the most degrading influence of the road is the women, for in many doss-houses both men and women are accommodated. Give a pal a copper to swear that *he* knows that you and the woman you bring are man and wife, and you may have your bed together. Only, if the doss-house keeper suspects you, he will charge you more. Poor women of the roads! They have lost their highest power to uplift, to purify, to ennoble man; they have gained a most awful power to shame men down to their own depths, to drag men down, down to drink and wanton devilry. Numbers of men in kip-houses live on the profits of prostitution by acting as bullies for these poor women.

Add together all these influences of the doss-house—its homelessness, its dirt, its varied inhabitants—particularly the mouchers, thieves and women—and to them add one more universally prevailing accompaniment, drink. Drink! their only joy, their only pleasure, their only heart's-ease from every pain!

And what do you do when you are tired, weary, despondent, exhausted (You never are so despairing, so desperate as they), but what do you do? Take a quiet rest by the fireside? *They cannot! Music? They have it not!* The soothing refreshment of little children, bathed and bedwards, with their good-night kiss and child prayers? These men never hear a gentle word addressed to them. Quiet prayer? How can these men pray? Why should they pray? They feel themselves God-forsaken! God-forgotten! They feel it bitterly, oh! so bitterly! Time was when life was as bright to them as 'tis to you, when hopes were high of noble happy manhood. *Then they were thrown out of work. They sought work—work, not alms, but WORK; man's right and man's unceasing necessity. But their country refused it them, and let them drift on to the road. And so they were forced, forced to beg, to steal, to live with the lowest of the low, and thus become what they now are. Would you pray thus? Where are the hands of Christ stretched out to bless them?—our hands, Christ inspired? They see them not, they feel them not, for they know themselves to be outcast; outcast from man and, they think, from God Almighty too. And so they drink—is that not the poor man's quickest way to get out of Manchester? To drink himself dead drunk?*

At 10 o'clock we went to bed. You cannot go to bed except at stated times. One hundred and thirty or more sleeping around us. Boots under your flock bed; you will want them in the morning. My mate tied his little money round his leg. Clothes tied on to the bed head, or under you, or between your rugs and coverlet. Naked we crept into bed—that is the wisest plan in a doss-house, for you will most likely have company in the night, and if naked you may not carry it all away. Sheets do duty for a fortnight; seven days at the top, seven days more at the bottom. There are too good rugs, a coverlet, and a flock bed.

Sleep? Who are these companions of the night? You watch them, as hour after hour they are let upstairs. Many fine, strong, well-built men they seem, but how thin! And look at their rags, poor worn garments! and some, one mass of filth indescribable. Who slept in my bed last night, you wonder? Your flesh begins to creep. You scratch; you

listen to others all around scratching also. The drunkards roll in heavily and fling themselves down to sleep. You lie awake listening, and you find nearly all cough! cough! cough! the piteous hacking cough of consumption. Is the life of the tramp one merry round of song, "Under the greenwood tree"? Listen to him as with oath or tired fretfulness he coughs and coughs and coughs again, vainly seeking sleep. Do you wonder that he coughs? Wet by day, often wet by night; wet feet, wet limbs, wet body. Starved with cold, and starved with hunger, little wonder he is a fit and ready prey; and then an active propagator of one of England's greatest diseases—consumption.

Thus passes the long night, with fitful snatches of sleep. The policeman's whistle shrills again and again from the street. Yells as of one murdered pierce the air, but no one moves or turns; we are used to all that here! The morning dawns: 4.30—some dozen labourers are aroused to go and seek their casual task at the dockyard gate; 5, more are awakened; 6, many more; and by 8 o'clock the majority have left their night's abode.

How long shall we allow this national disgrace—the compulsory herding together of gaol-bird, vagrant, moucher, thief, and all the hangers-on of a big city, with the respectable working man just left home seeking a job, and, more pitiable still, the young clerk looking for a new post? They must come to the doss-house, there is nowhere else so cheap; and coming, they learn evil, lose self-respect, and sink to the level of their evil surroundings.

#### WHAT I SAW—THE DRIFTED AND THE DRIFTWOOD.

I wanted to see why young men on the road, who seek work and find none, go down so quickly in hope, in self-respect, and in power to work. I felt it my duty to see and to feel as far as I could, so that I might be able to fight against the wrong conditions which to-day are dragging down thousands and thousands of our finest manhood into degradation unthinkable.

I have seen two great classes of men on the roads and in all the common lodging-houses I visited.

In the first, the biggest and the greatest class, I have seen old and middle-aged men, professional mouchers, pickpockets, thieves, habitual beggars, and the hangers-on of the great cities, rag and bone pickers, shoe lace sellers and others. Taken as a whole, all these men drink heavily when they can, swear



heavily always, hate and cannot abide regular steady labour and toil. Most of these men have been in gaol. A great number of them are known and watched by the detectives and police. They rarely go to the casual ward unless their clothes are alive with vermin. Their home is the doss-house, a constantly shifting home, with no furniture and no belongings whatsoever of their own, except what they carry as they tramp. They are the vagabonds and vagrants of England.

Were they always what they are now? No; they were once bright, smart, quick young fellows, with good characters, with the young man's usual ambitions and hopes.

Did they want to become what they are now? They loathed the coming evil, they fought against it as long as they could, they hated the swamp of evil into which they felt themselves to be sinking.

What forced them down to this loathsome life? In the majority of cases it was lack of work. Many yielded to some sort of crime or evil, such as drink, gambling, theft. But far and away the greater majority left home seeking for work, and went on looking for work, week in week out, till sick at heart and despairing—for it is a favour to-day to give a man a job, a job at which he fully earns every penny he gets—and few people realise the hopelessness and deadening effects of unemployment.

Whilst these men were seeking work they had to live very cheaply, which means they had to go to a common lodging-house with often no money for food or for shelter, until they met with men who would and did teach them how to beg, how to dodge the police and the best houses to call at. These men were bad, evil men, who cursed with every sentence, who drank heavily when they could get drink, who knew all the evil and villainy which could be known. The young men looking for work had to spend their evenings with these fellows, had to sleep with them, had to learn from them, for they were starving. Do you wonder that soon, or perhaps after a long, long brave struggle, they became like them? They were treated as outcasts—they became outcasts! They were treated as thieves and vile—they became thieves and vile! and, my brother, you would become like them, if forced into the same degrading surroundings, into the same wretchedness and despair of body and mind.

These men didn't want to become vile and outcast from all that makes life joyous, any more than you do now. If twenty years ago you had been made to change places with one of them, he would have been "up," surrounded by all the delights of a happy home, and you would have been "down,"

a wretched outcast of the streets, loathing and being loathed.

These men were not once what they are now; unemployment, starvation, and bad surroundings which they couldn't help, have made them what they are.

But there was another great class of men I saw, met, and spoke to on the roads and in the doss-houses—young men, mere lads, and middle-aged men too, who have only been on the road a few short weeks. Were these fellows criminal? No! Were they thieves or pinchers? No! What were they doing there, amongst the low company of the doss-house? They were seeking work—tramping from town to town seeking work—and of necessity spending the night at the doss-house since there is nowhere else so cheap. How were they existing? Many were famished, starving and just beginning, hunger-driven, to sing on the streets for a few coppers or very timidly to beg. Poor lads!

Are these always going to be what they are now, honest, genuine seekers after work? Are these always going to remain temperate, kind, clean, hopeful lads, such as they are now? They cannot. Do what they will, they cannot. Down they drift, do what they can.

This is the most pitiable waste of our time! This is the sin, the wickedness over which the churches should weep; for this they should repent themselves in bitterness of soul, since, whilst they have been busy sowing the seed of party strife to reap the Dead Sea fruit of sectarian bitterness, reform—that is to say, the business-like organisation of the life of our nation, its young men, has been forgotten!

Where, then, lies the fault? How is it that we witness to-day this national murder of youthful power and ambition? The fault lies in individual and national indifference.

"But they won't work," says one. It's a lie! They *will* work, they *do* work at the only pitiable work we as a nation have allowed them to do. They tramp and beg. We have allowed them, nay, compelled them to tramp and beg, and they have become professionals at the job; and, poor wretches, they will tramp on, beg on, for ever, until the day of doom! Do you say, "That isn't work"? Try it for yourself and see.

"But they won't work!" Just so! exactly what you would expect if you were not so thick skulled. Can a parson, or a commercial traveller, or a clerk, turn at once to navvying, or to coal-heaving, without becoming "work-shy," with a desperate sweat running off him, until at length he limps away from his all too strange and laborious work? And each

of these men are well fed. Why won't a tramp work? Because he can't! Strip him and examine him. Poor ill-clad wretch! Poor starved body! Poor fleshless bones! No well-filled stomach here; and lungs? listen to his cough! Take out and dissect his mind, moreover, if you can, and you will find a will-less, soul-less animality, just such as—you were only wise—you would expect.

"It's their own fault!" says another. Which, in the majority of cases, is another ignorant lie. Have ye never read, have ye never believed that in England to-day there are hundreds of thousands of men, just such men as you and I, who never have and never will get regular, steady, life-giving, home-supporting work? Yes, the great majority of us are convicted of this condemning fact—unbelief and indifference to the condition and needs of the poorest of our land. How are we to alter it? We must clear our minds of cant and look facts, plain ugly facts, in the face—the fact of a continuous drift of young manhood down into the swamp of destitution and despair—the fact, moreover, that this downward drift is loathed and hated by those who know themselves to be drifting—the fact of the accumulated driftwood of past years of national neglect—the derelicts, the vagrant hordes of our roads.

The drifting must be stopped at the beginning of the long drift downwards; the driftwood, at first sight useless, mere wreckage of the ocean, must by long patience and mingled firmness be redeemed.

### THE DRIFTING.

#### THE NEWCASTLE CLERK AND THE YOUNG BAKER.

The saddest, most pathetic sight on the road to-day is the large number of young men who are drifting down through lack of work. One that I spoke to was a clerk from Newcastle; he had lost his place through the bankruptcy of his firm; he had sought for work in his own town and the surrounding towns in vain. He had lived on his relations and friends until for shame he could do so no longer. And so one morning, with only a very few shillings in his pocket, he had started on the road to walk to Liverpool in order to seek for work there.

When I saw him on Saturday, April 2nd, at Rochdale, he had only left Newcastle some few weeks ago, quite a short time; but, although possessed of a pleasant appearance and manner, and only about twenty-three years of age, his chance of a job as clerk was gone. I have been in business for nine

years myself. I speak of what I know. No employer seeking a clerk would have looked at him twice with so many other men available. Why? What was the matter with him? He had no collar, his linen was filthy, his clothes crumpled and soiled, unbrushed and untidy. He showed only too plainly that already he had begun to lose his self-respect. Had this lad done any wrong? No; his only wrong was that he had sought work and found none! No *wrong* here, surely! The lad wanted, still wants work, wherever he may be to-day—wants to earn his living; but his fatherland will have none of him, denies him his right to work, and so to live an honourable life.

But why had he thus let himself go down in looks and dress? Because he couldn't help it. I defy any penniless man to help it on the road. When a lad comes on the road seeking work he must live and sleep cheaply. He must, therefore, go to a common lodging-house. The first evening he spends there is a nightmare to him. The vicious, drunken companions, the beggars and vagrants of the roads, mouchers, pinchers, ex-gaol birds; the conversation, every sentence an oath; the suspicious eyeing up and down of the company. Maybe he is robbed the first night of food, of clothes, or of money. The bed in the open sleeping room, with no privacy of any kind, and the verminous sheets and bedding, are all a horror! There is a tap at which to wash, but no soap, and woe to him if he is fool enough to use the towel. Who used it last, and in what state was his face and skin? He is also tired, disheartened, disgusted, sick, perhaps, also—he will be soon—pinched for food, starved with wet, with cold, with hunger. Has this lad now any chance—whatever qualifications for his work he may have had—has he any chance for successfully seeking employment as a clerk?

On Sunday morning I saw him again, taking a bit of breakfast. "Where are you off to this morning; which way are you going?" I asked. "Oh! I'm just going to do a bit of street singing," in a half-ashamed, half-defiant way. (I was an unknown tramp, of course.) "Street singing? Why, have you tried it before?" "Yes; last Sunday morning I was stranded in Manchester, had nothing to pay for my doss, no food. So I was desperate, and went out into some back streets singing, and got enough to pay my doss and my food." And so that Sunday morning he sang in the streets of Rochdale, and the next Sunday morning maybe he was singing in the streets of Halifax or some other town; next Sunday somewhere else.

And you also—my so respectable, well-dressed friend—

you would do the same, where you were not known; when hunger had pinched and clammed you, when cold and exposure had made all your being shiver, when even exhaustion was driven back by the hungry, ravenous wolf within you; seeking food, shelter, and warmth, you then would do the same, and with a quivering, exhausted voice would go street singing to receive the pence of the poor, and the averted eyes and cold denials of the rich!

And so—like thousands of others—the young clerk from Newcastle took to the road, because there was nothing else to do. So, by one short step, he was thrown away from all good, helpful, wise counsel and influence. So he found himself, all unknowing, in the midst of one of England's licensed hatcheries of crime, a common lodging-house. There, driven by hunger, taught by evil companions, living a life he loathes, he is losing all good—his ideals, his manhood, his hope, his ambition, his power for work, his soul, his God; and he is gaining all evil, in a living, present hell of hopelessness and despair!

If you do not believe it, go without money in your pocket, and learn it for yourself. England will have to keep that poor lad on the road all his short life. Casual wards, prisons, asylums are all ready for him, for these are mighty England's only care and provision for her drifting, helpless lads.

I also met a young fellow in a Preston doss-house who had only been on the road for about a fortnight; he had tramped up with a companion from the Potteries, seeking work. He was a baker, and as quiet, sober, and respectable a young fellow as you could wish. But when I saw him he was tired, exhausted, and aching in body from exposure, hunger, and starvation. Two nights before he and his mate had no money for lodgings, and so had to spend the night out. They walked until they could walk no longer, and then—there was no other refuge near—lay down under the shelter of a hedge—just like thousands have to do each night in Christian England! When he awoke it was only with acute pain that he struggled on till, when the sun rose high and the passers-by thronged the roads at the entrance of Preston on that Sunday morning, all at once, without warning, down he dropped, as one dead, in a swoon from the exposure and starvation. Did any of the well-dressed throng sympathise? None! It was only two tramps on the road, and one had fainted; and, like the Pharisee and Levite of old, they passed, unheeding, by. I myself felt the lad's head on the Monday night, in a Preston "kip"-house, marked with a great, ugly swelling right across the base of the skull;

and yet in such a condition of mind and body he was seeking work!

But why should that lad, or any other lad, be compelled to thus insanely seek for work upon the roads?—and whilst seeking work become unfitted for work? If that lad—as many another—finds no work for six months, or twelve, what is he worth then? What can he be worth? He has learnt to live without working, and how has he lived?—by begging, by pinching, by stealing, by selling boot-laces! by telling a tale! He has been driven to lie, to steal, to swear, to drink, in spite of policemen, detectives, magistrates, and gaol, for the wild, ravening wolf of hunger and cold is fiercer than all these dread fears; and once sent to gaol for but doing what raw Nature makes us do, he dreads that terror no more. And then we wonder the "out-of-work" won't work! We wonder, with marvellous piety, why men should become "Weary Willies" or "work-shy," when we ourselves might become worse than the worst of all if subjected, forced into the same degrading surroundings of the "kip"-house, forced to be outcasts from all uplifting society, forced from all hope and from all healthy work.

#### A NIGHT OUT IN PRESTON STREETS.

"A Night Out." The words are said lightly enough, and convey but little to most of our minds, but some hours passed in the clear star-lit night, with maybe the moonlight rippling across the waters, a silvery way to the far beyond. Some hours thus, warmly clad, after a good hearty supper and a bulky packet of sandwiches for the early dawn.

I speak of a very different night out. For weeks, through most of November, December and January, my mate had had no work, nothing whatever to do, and the little savings of the summer having vanished, he had been living at a common lodging-house, the homeless labourer's wretched substitute for home. From time to time he had managed to pick up an odd job or two, just bringing in a few pence or shillings.

It was at Preston. For several days he had been living on 1d. a day, a ha'porth of bread, one big thick slice of white bread, and a ha'porth of "duck"—which is just all the odd scraps of all kinds of meat at the butcher's shop baked together in the oven. But yesterday he had to go without even that, and then only managed to get his night's lodging with his last three coppers through the kindness of the kip boss. With an empty pocket and a despairing, desperate

heart, he walked about all day seeking work and finding none. Ill-clad, the bitter raw wind pierced through his few garments into his very bones and being. Fits of cold shivering shook his frame from time to time, whilst a hacking cough told its tale of the past.

He turned into the doss-house for an hour or two in the evening, making belief he had enough for his lodging, until about 9.30, when he was turned out—out into the wet, chilly streets once more. He hangs about, and walks the streets in the centre of the town, trying to tell his tale to some of the passers-by, making another effort to see whether anybody will take pity on him or not. "Beg y'r pardon, Sir, but I've got no money for my night's lodging; would you give me a copper towards my doss." But there is none to pity him.

The city clocks strike eleven; soon the streets are full of expensively dressed men and women, with heavy gold chains, gold rings, gold bracelets and ornaments. He goes up to one after another, as well as he can, whilst evading the watchful eye of the policeman. "Beg y'r pardon, Sir, I've nothing for my lodging to-night; would you give a poor fellow a copper for his doss." And they look on him as on a dog, and either deign no reply at all, or tell him in impatient tones, "I've got nothing for you!"

Then is the time, my well-dressed friends, when you may feel thankful that the policeman is so close at hand, and that the poor starved beggar is so starved, so cold, so weak! If he had one-half the food and wine in him that you have, you would be knocked senseless on the road and robbed,—and do you cry "Shame!" Why shame? Why should you not also suffer a little sometimes, as well as he? Why should he bear all—all the misery of cold, hunger, starvation, hopelessness, fear and scorn?

The crowds have melted away, and the chances are getting less and less of that so much needed fourpence for shelter and food. So, fiercely, my mate turns down into darkly-lit Leighton Street, a nice place (as he says) for begging money for lodgings.

"Is it true that it isn't safe for a well-dressed man to go down Leighton Street late at night?" asked a friend of mine; and the quick and ready answer was, "I've known the nights when if I'd met the likes of you there, and you'd refused me a night's lodging, I should have thought nothing of turning you upside down, and letting the money run out of your pockets; but, mind you, I should have left you so that you couldn't call out for help!"

And now 'tis midnight. Too late now to hope for help. The rain falls piteously, the pavements are wet and full of pools. A friendly doorway, with just a little shelter, looks inviting, so against that the outcast leans wearily, and seeks to forget his sorrows by a moment's sleep whilst he stands.

But 'tis not five minutes before tramp, tramp, and the bull's-eye of the watchful policeman flashes on him. "Come on, my lad, let's have thee out of this. Keep a-going!"

"Keep a-going!" Oh, the bitterness of it! Keep a-going! Yes, but where? How those weary limbs and tired feet would "Keep a-going" did but the light, warmth, and love of a true home gleam out in the darkness miles ahead! Then he would "Keep a-going"! But why, why should he keep a-going, moving on, moving on to nowhere? Is this indeed a night in Hell, where souls lost through pride, fulness and fatness of living, are hounded on by the police of hell for ever? No, this is the grim reality of nightly experience in Christian England. For every night, on the streets of our big towns, the son of man to-day hath not where to lay his weary limbs and aching head.

And so, all through the age-long hours of night, until the dawn, the policemen keep him "going." If to escape them he turns out towards the open country, the town police follow him till the county police are met. If he turns back he is still followed. The policeman will often turn round and down a side street, but only a few minutes and round again, and if the poor beaten tramp offers to stop, "What are y'r hanging about for? Keep a-going."

And if he doesn't mind what he says, he is perhaps locked up for "loitering with intent," and woe to him then if he happens to have about him an old key, or a penknife, or a piece of old candle, or a bit of wire, or a pair of pliers; as likely as not then he will get seven days, or fourteen days, or perhaps even up to three months in gaol.

And so down Gradwell Street he turns, up and down, down and up, up and down, till the starved brain has photographed by the dim light every stone, sett and grid therein. Up and down, down and up, till the footfall of the "knocker-up" sounds in the distant streets, and the labourers heavily plod off to the work of another day.

Is this awful night at an end? May he now go home? Home? This poor man is homeless, an outcast, of less value, though strong and only 21, than a horse or a pig. His country has no need of him. His city can only keep him on the streets!

So wearily, footsore, cold, hungry, and exhausted he goes

to seek work! The irony of it! And do you wonder that when the dockyard ganger sees him, *although he wants a man*, he says, "No, we're full up, Johnny!"

He turns away desperate, and should he meet a little girl going to the shop with money in her hand the temptation "over-gets" him—he takes the money from the child, and runs and runs until he gets some "stuff to eat." And do you wonder? Could you punish him?

Shall the poor ever cry in vain? Shall this drift downward never cease? Where, where is the man to-day who, to the tens of thousands of vagrants and casual labourers of our land, shall be as an hiding place from the wind, as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land?

"THE PENNY SIT UP," PRESTON, OR,  
"THE HOUSE OF DESPAIR."

The common or model lodging-house, the doss-house, or kip-house is, perhaps, the greatest source of moral contamination in our land.

In the doss-house night by night, in the only living-room, the kitchen, for the whole long evening, there mix and mingle a motley throng. Honest fellows seeking work, professional beggars and thieves; prostitutes, cheap hawkers, and gaol-birds. They come here because it is the only place to come to, and it is comparatively cheap—3d. or 4d. a bed are the usual charges in the larger towns.

I do not blame the doss-house keeper. He is a doss-house keeper. How can he turn the beggar with money in his pocket away? As in every business, so in this. Some are more honest and cleanly than others.

In Preston there are at least thirty-four common lodging-houses of one description or another, twenty-three of which take in women. Some are small and need not count for much; others, with from fifty to seventy beds or more. Preston provides, night by night, perhaps one thousand beds, not counting the casual ward in which the men and women of the road sleep. The licensed common lodging-houses are under some sort of police supervision and inspection.

I do not know whether Preston is unique in one respect. I hope it is. It has a "Penny sit up." I call it "The house of despair." I have been there, so I speak of what I know. I went meaning to spend the night, one short night, there—short if you pass the hours of rest in refreshing sleep on a comfortable bed, but age-long if you spend it in this house of despair. I came out with a leaden weight upon my soul

that men could sink to such depths of woe, and that we, we had thrust them thither.

This is not a dream. This is not the wild imagination of a heated brain. It is sober, solid fact. This house of despair is to be found in Shepherd Street, Preston. Its only recommendation is its cheapness; but how dearly you buy that cheapness! For one penny you buy the privilege of entrance—this admits you to a room about twenty-five feet long by eighteen feet broad.

You enter it in the evening, when the day is done. Already there are some twenty or twenty-five men there. The room is literally bare, with nothing in it, nothing! No fireplace, no stove,\* no hot water pipes, no sink, no water, no beds, no chairs, no blankets, no mattresses—nothing, nothing whatever for the furnishing of the room except a small, very small oil lamp, very dimly lighted, and four long wooden kneelers about two inches off the floor sloping upwards towards the back. Two of these at either ends of the room, and the other two running right down the middle of the room back to back. What are they for? This surely is not a house of prayer? No, these are pillows, wooden pillows, and presently the floor of this room will be covered with bodies lying feet to feet in two double rows down the length of the room.

When you enter some are eating their bit of food; but remember, there is no stove,\* no warmth, no fire here, only a (washing) boiler in the yard, where you may get hot water. There are no cooking utensils; every man carries his own drum under his coat behind his back—just an old tin of some sort with a wire handle. When your food is eaten there is nothing to do but lie down on your length of the floor, some six feet by two feet, and then if your limbs ache with lying down on the hard boards sit up, and if you are privileged to have one of the select spots against the wall, you can lean against that if you will. If you are wet through you sit or lie in your wet rags till they dry, that is all!

Think of it! Ten, twelve, fourteen hours thus. Thirty to sixty men thus, night by night, in misery, wretchedness, filth of body, and starvation. The conversation is in the dull, hopeless undertone of exhausted men, except when it flashes forth now and again in the tone of revenge, hatred and bitterness against us who have condemned them to this. It is always heavily laden with oath or blasphemy, and is of begging, pinching, rogues, trickery, beastiality, at the best of the criminal courts, their prisoners and judges. The

\* I have since spent a night here—the longest night of my life. There are plenty of hot water pipes, which I much regret I omitted to note in the darkness of my first visit.

leaden weight of exhaustion and despair is only lifted when a man is dead drunk.

And so these men try to settle themselves to sleep. Sleep? Were human beings, God indwelt, ever meant thus to rest, in dirt, in degradation, in depression indescribable?

No clean horse-box with freshly-strewn straw, this! No well-drained pig-stye with abundance of bedding, warmth and food, this! No rat-hole, this, where father, mother, and baby rats may live together and seek their meat from God!

But a vermin-infested room, bare of aught but men's bodies clad in rags—bodies which are not washed or groomed or cleaned from one twelvemonth to another, except when forced to go to casual ward or gaol. Bodies which are half-starved, emaciated, lean. Bodies which carry the germs of horrible disease, yet which are untended, uncared for. Bodies which, because they are so poor, so poor in rich life blood, are thereby fit and proper food for the tramp's, the dirty beggar's worst enemy, lice. Little crawling, clinging, biting lice, which breed in twenty-four hours in the seams of your clothes next your skin, and live upon you—biting, biting, feeding, feeding, like the gnawing worm of hell.

The atmosphere! Figuratively speaking, you could cut it with a knife! You yourself sleep next to an old decrepit man, who cannot always control his bodily actions; his trousers stink, stink; you will carry the stench in your nostrils for a week. Sixty thus, and if not quite thus, all unwashed, all with the smell of the unwashed. Add to this, rank tobacco smoke of all blends, some unknown even to connoisseurs, such as "kerb-stone twist" (old chews), old cigar ends, "o.p.s." (other people's stumps), and old dried tea leaves. Add to this foul breath, some very foul, add also the stale atmosphere of the room itself when empty, and remember scarce any ventilation during the night except the occasional opening of the door into the yard, and you may think you imagine what you never will, till you experience it.

Thus the poorest of the poor live by night in Preston, thus the local authorities allow them to live, thus we Christian men through our ignorance, our party strife, and our fear of businesslike reform suffer it, and shame on us all.

It is the cause of this great national evil of needless degradation I wish to fight; not any one result, disgusting though it be. Yet be it known in Preston that the "Penny sit up" is a Lancashire disgrace—a disgrace to the soul and spirit of man, and not a cause for pious rejoicing.

My mate when stranded has gone to beg for bread to many a house in Preston, at which instead of being helped

he has been told, "Take this ticket to the Shelter in Shepherd Street; we've nothing to give you; we send all our broken meat to the Shelter." Do these people know what the Shelter or the "Penny sit up" is like? Have they ever been there? Do they know that this broken food is placed in a basket on the floor of the room and scrambled for, in a wild mad rush of angry blaspheming men?

These are facts, indisputable—and one further,—do they know that these poor men, because they have slept the night in Shepherd Street Mission Shelter, and thereby, I suppose, touched the fringe of Christian sympathy, are refused admittance in the morning to a neighbouring doss-house of no great refinement, lest their living freight gathered the night before in Shepherd Street Shelter should fall off them!

This Shelter has, I believe, been open now for some few years. Doubtless the owners and instigators feel they are doing a good work for the very poor, and this makes me hesitate in saying anything; but I am convinced such a place only brings men down permanently to a lower level than the doss-house, and encourages them to stay there. If in those years it has not been possible to put a fire in the room, to put in American cloth covered bunks like the Salvation Army have, to put forms round the room, to provide some rugs, to humanise and put a touch of home into the place, to light the place up with real Christian hope and effort—I say deliberately it would have been much better for everyone, to have closed the shelter long ago.

If Christian people can do no better than this, in God's name let them stand back; they put to shame the living Christ; and let the children of this world, who are often wiser than the children of light, be our guides.

#### TRAMPS IN CHURCH, AND WHY.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." I have for many a year thought of the Magnificat as the Song of the Poor, but I never thought so more than on Sunday night, April 3rd, when with dirty clothes, dusty, unblackened shoes, open navvy's shirt, and an old scarf round my neck for a collar, tired and weary with long tramping and little food, I sat with my mate in Bolton's magnificent Parish Church. Then when we rose after the lesson to sing this song, "He hath filled the hungry with good things," the tears came unbidden to my eyes, my song was silenced, but my heart said, "God can, God will, for it is He who wills it.

Oh, that the Great Deliverer would use me in this His great work of to-day!"

For three days I had lived with tramps, some honest, most not honest; some genuine work-seekers, but most men who would not stick at regular work for all you could give them. I also had tramped thirty-three miles the first day, and, unused to it, was tired, very footsore, and aching in every limb. I had slept with and amongst tramps, 130 or more in the same big room on the first night. Of course, no one knew me. I wished to go just as any other man would have to go who had to take the road, unknown, a passer-on. Why were we in church, then? Surely tramps of all men do not usually go to church. We went because I wished to see how two working-men in rough clothes would be treated in a large town church, because I wished to see whether the churchwardens and vergers would have any sympathy with the outcast tramp poor. How were we received? As we walked up the approach to the church feeling awkward and conscious of being eyed by policemen and the well-dressed throng, a man of about fifty years of age quietly saluted my mate. "Good evening! Are you coming to church? Glad to see you; there are plenty of free seats; the verger will show you in." We entered, advanced towards the verger, who gave us books and showed us into the next empty free seat, with hassocks and seat rugs exactly like the rest. We took our seats, and looking round, I noticed to my great surprise that the same man who had spoken to us outside had come and seated himself next to my friend. It is not every man who chooses to sit next a tramp. After the service, as we walked out of the church, he asked us how we liked the service and the sermon, spoke very warmly of the vicar, and on saying "Good-night," asked my mate in a quiet undertone, "Are you all right for the night?" in a voice and way that meant that if we had been needing the fourpence each for lodging money he would have given it. Need I say that as we went to our humble doss-house I was glad?

What made me so glad? Just this. It is the Church's greatest work of to-day to welcome and befriend the working-man, the poor humble wayfarer of the roads, who has not and cannot have any change of clothes or "Sunday best." And more, it is the Church's greatest duty to fight for these vagrant tens of thousands, and to win for them homes. If Churchmen of old sold their precious chalices and golden communion plate to free the poor captive slave from his captivity, shall we not to-day be willing to sell our goods and give of our abundance that we may win back and redeem

England's costliest treasure—human souls—from England's deepest, foulest disgrace, the vagrant, vagabond, workless stream which flows its sluggish course along England's broad roadways?

For there is a stream which flows past every man's door, flowing, flowing, a dark, muddy river along every main roadway of England, by night in greatest volume flowing in and through the multitudes of common lodging-houses and tramp wards of our land, partly also in open parks, under hedges, in farmers' hovels, barns, or brick-yards. A man never knows when he may drift therein. The firm's bankruptcy, the completion of the job, a change in machinery, some stock speculation at the world's end, and he is suddenly out of work. There is none at home. He seeks for work in vain. Friends bear with him long, but at last there comes a time when he feels he can stand it no longer. And so next morning he rises with the lark and off he goes. Where? On the road, of course—there is nowhere else to go. By midday he has tramped perhaps to the nearest town. He begins to search it for work; he is tired, footsore, sick at heart. Soon it is too late to ask at any more places, so he thinks of the night. Where shall he spend it? He must get a bed cheap; the few precious coppers he has must be made to last as long as possible. So he asks the way to a common lodging-house, or a workman's rest, or a model lodging-house, all variants of the same thing, where he will get a bed for 3d. or 4d. to put him over the night. He enters, pays for his bed, and sits horrified at the company, at the noise, at the dirt, at the sights, sounds, and language of his fellow-lodgers. There are skilled artisans of every sort, some of the cleverest men in England here, but men who are lost to all self-respect through casual labour, bad company, and continual drunkenness. There are strong navvies and labourers whose work is here and there, ever passing on; there are mouchers—professional beggars and thieves, for most of England's gaol-birds are in England's common lodging-houses; and yet worst of all there are the multitudes of women tramps, women beggars, and prostitutes of the streets. All together (when it is a "doss" house where women are allowed) they mix, and as ever the bad influences are the loudest and the noisiest; there is nothing refining, nothing loving, nothing gentle, nothing hopeful here.

It was this that I wished to see, this that I wished to feel, not that I might be able to boast or talk about it, but that I might be able to do better work in helping men out of it, and most of all in changing the whole conditions of national life



which makes and keeps our common lodging-houses the degrading, vicious influence that they are. For we must never forget the "doss-house" is a necessity. We cannot do without it, and it cannot be materially better than it is whilst we allow criminals, dissolute and wicked, of all ages, to mix and mingle freely, and form the chief influence in these the only homes of tens of thousands of honest men seeking work. I went to see the road—the road by day and the road by night, to feel the woes of this dull stream of humanity drifting downward. I have seen it, some of it, some little only, through Wigan to Manchester, through Middleton to Rochdale, through Bury to Bolton, through Chorley to Preston; and everywhere we met men drifting downward. We ate with them, we slept with them—young men just driven by stress on to the road, driven, not seeking for pleasure, but seeking for work, and driven on to the road by hunger, cold, and starvation to learn their first lesson on how to live without working. I have seen old men also, who are now scarce aught but driftwood, old, rotten, tottering into a drunkard's, beggar's, thief's grave; and in the Judgment Day the blame of their lives will be ours to bear. 'Twas not their fault they sank; they sought work and found none; they loathed the life into which they found themselves sinking, into which we as a nation pushed them, out of which we never allowed them to crawl. We have lived easily, delicately, or pleasantly; they have lived hardly, oh, so hardly! with what sense of degradation, despair, wretchedness, none of us know. 'Twill be our turn by-and-by to suffer and theirs to go at ease, for "that servant which knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more."

I have seen women also, women on the road, women in the common lodging-houses. I watched one in the evening hour dressing to go out on the street. I noted the womanly care with which she re-trimmed the much-befeathered hat, put on her blouse, arranged her skirt, and then with a glance at the little bit of broken glass in the common kitchen, and a final touch or two, and with a light "Ta, ta" to a little group of friends, went out—out into the night; the night when deeds of shame most frequently are done; went out also to earn her "kip," out selling her soul to feed her poor body. Think you women do this for fun? Think you, they love the life?

Think you she first began it for a joke? All this, and much, much more in the kip-house; and I want to alter it. I want to change it! You smile! But say we all only wanted, willed to change it—it would be changed! Why should our lads and lasses thus perish? Why should the bairns who have cost us so much thus perish?—far better they had never been born. Why should our sons and daughters—nay, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, thus perish? Why? they perish but through our miserable party spirit, our callousness, our ignorance, and our wicked fear. We can at least all make our homes true homes, where growing lads and lasses may know they are more than welcome, for the home is ever theirs. We can all warn others to keep off the road. We can say, "Shun, avoid the road," for the road and the common lodging-house are the way to shame and degradation. We can all learn to discriminate—look at the tramp when he passes. Some are deserving, needy, starving. These will say the least and need the most. Help such with a cup of tea, a slice of bread and butter, a kind word, and perhaps a copper or two, and, oh, that it were possible, with work. But remember, most men on the road are not in a fit condition to work. Would you be, if miserable, half-starved, and ill? And also remember you can never be sure of a tramp's tale. A confirmed tramp, a three months' tramp, knows not truth his only effort is to tell a good tale.

All young men, and men who have a vote, must and ought to study social reform, ought to read the reports of the Poor Law Commission and study them, think over them, talk about them, claim the whole subject for the nation's action and refuse to ally it with any political party. I believe that destitution can be done away with. I believe that 80 per cent. of the vast army of vagrants can be redeemed. I believe that here is the work for all, for the individual, for the Church, for the corporate action of the whole nation. And I believe this because I believe the work is God's, and it is God Himself who calls men to this His work to-day.

#### WHAT MUST WE DO?

We must first try to realise the facts—above all, the great awful fact of the downward flowing stream of unemployed and casual labourers into the destitution and the degradation of the vagrant tramp.

It is most difficult to realise the vastness of this ocean of miseries, for we never see it in one mass, only in tiny wavelets, as one by one, or two by two, the ragged wretches



splash against us on the shingle of our roads. Or, first starting, steal away stealthily from cottage home, town, street, one by one, to swell the great throng of seekers after work upon the roads.

Few people see even a casual ward full, or a crowded doss-house kitchen. Yet there are about 25,000 professional tramps, and thousands and thousands more casual labourers, navvies, and others on the roads seeking work. The work-house casual wards alone provide accommodation for about 12,000 beds; for what an army must the hosts of doss-houses, workmen's rests and shelters provide?

Then we must seek the cause of this downward drift. What is it? There are two main causes producing pauperism and destitution—casual labour and drink. The first and the mightiest is the increasing volume of casual labour, work by odd jobs, the baneful employment by the day, with which we are all so familiar. The Commissioners of the Poor Laws appointed three groups of special investigators to discover what it was that was CREATING paupers.

\*“The outcome of those investigations was all the more impressive in that it was not what we anticipated. We do not exaggerate when we say that all these inquirers—numbering, with their assistants, more than a dozen, starting on different lines of investigation, and pursuing their researches independently all over the kingdom—came, without concert, to the same conclusion, namely, that of *all the causes or conditions predisposing to pauperism, the most potent, the most certain, and the most extensive in its operation was this method of employment in odd jobs.* Contrary to the expectations of some of our number, and of some of themselves, our investigators did not find that low wages could be described, generally speaking, as a cause of pauperism. They were unable to satisfy themselves that insanitary conditions of living, or excessive hours of labour, could be shown to be, on any large scale, a cause of pauperism. They could find practically no ground for believing that outdoor relief, by adversely affecting wages, was itself a cause of pauperism. It could not even be shown that an extravagant expenditure on drink, or a high degree of occasional drunkenness—habits of which the evil consequences can scarcely be exaggerated, and which are ruinous to individuals in all grades—were at all invariably accompanied or followed by pauperism. All these conditions, injurious though they are in other respects, were not found, if combined with reasonable regularity of employment, to

\* Poor Law Commission, Minority Report II., p. 195.

lead in any marked degree to the creation of pauperism. Thus the regularly employed railway porters, lowly paid as they are, contribute only infinitesimally to pauperism. Even the agricultural labourers in receipt, perhaps, of the lowest money wages of any section of the wage-earners, do not nowadays, so far as they belong to the section in regular employment, contribute largely to the pauperism of adult able-bodied life. Again, though the average consumption of alcoholic drink among the miners, the boilermakers, the iron and steel workers, and many other trades appear to be enormous, these trades do not contribute largely to pauperism. On the other hand, where high earnings and short hours and healthy conditions are combined with the method of casual employment—as is the case with some sections of wharf and riverside labourers, and of the men who labour in connection with furnaces and gasworks—there we find demoralisation of character, irregularity of life, and a constant recruiting of the pauper army.” Or, as the secretary of the Charity Organization says: “It is from the casual labour class that those who fall upon the Poor Law, relief works, or charitable funds are mostly drawn.” Or, as the Poor Law Majority Commissioners say: “There is a very general consensus of opinion that amongst industrial causes casual labour contributes more to pauperism than any other,” and “There is little doubt that to regularise casual labour would do more than any one remedy to diminish pauperism of the worst type.”

The second awful cause of this downward drift is excessive drinking. Dr. Ralph H. Crowley, of Bradford, says in “The Drink Problem,” after summarising the investigations on the relations of drink and pauperism of Chas. Booth, Alderman McDougall, and the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour: “Were a careful inquiry to be instituted into the cause of pauperism throughout the country, it seems almost certain that drink would claim a proportion of one-third to one-half.” He quotes also Dr. Sullivan, who divides alcoholic excess into (1) convivial drinking, which is gradually decreasing and is amenable to educational and religious influences; and (2) industrial drinking, which includes all forms of “misery drinking,” such as that caused by overwork, insufficient or unattractive food, overcrowding, and the unnatural and harmful conditions under which so many live. He closes by saying that the drink problem must be recognised as a part of the whole social problem, and that we should be “careful of apportioning more especial blame, as we habitually do, to those who happen, through drink, to

fall into destitution, and we may well give thought to the question, "Were those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell guilty above all others?"

If this be so, that the greater part of the vagrancy of to-day is caused by lack of work, and work in odd jobs—casual labour—and an ever-increasing volume of evidence and experience makes me accept this conclusion as true—if this be so, we must give up evading our duty by the all too frequent excuses, "They won't work," "It's their own fault," "They don't deserve help."

If this be so, we must fight the cause of this national sin. We must fight against casual labour as a national evil. We must fight against the unemployment we see all around us to-day. If unemployment is the evil, we must bring all our national resource, organisation and moral strength to do away with it.

For look at the effect of unemployment, or of casual labour; the lad is thrown out of work, he is forced out on to the road to seek for work, he is forced by the search for work away from all the softening and helpful influences of his home, and into the common lodging-house, to mix with the vilest characters of the country.

He becomes hopeless, seeking work and finding none; loses his self-respect, learning to live by law-breaking, for whether he begs or whether he steals, he breaks the law; he begins to feel the police are his enemies and not his friends, and worse still, he soon gets the feeling of being cast out—an outcast—not wanted by his fellow men. His friends don't want him, employers of labour don't want him, his fellow men don't want him, the decently dressed don't look at him, he is outcast, vile. There are few people who realise the hardening, the deadening, the degrading effects of such unemployment.

So he becomes State driftwood, social wreckage, either of the violent sort, as a thief, a burglar, or of the more cunning sort, an impostor, a beggar, or a begging-letter writer.

Do these fellows want to become thus? No. Do they want to go on the road? No. Do they like the company they find there? No. But they cannot help themselves; there is no one to care for them, to stand by them in their hour of need.

What is the remedy for it? What must we do? As individuals we can do but little. Yet we can look at the tramp as he passes by; he is a man, although he has fallen. Maybe it was not his fault that he fell. We can help the young especially, and encourage the lad seeking work. But

most useful, let our voices be heard incessantly pleading for a sane reform of our national attitude towards the work seeker and the vagrant. Have faith in men; have faith in God, and know things need not be as they are to-day. Things are wrong and must be righted; each can do his part.

As Christian people, as a Church, what can we do? We can remember the fact that this is God's great call to-day; that it is our possibility and our duty to make destitution and beggary cease for ever.

Individual conversion won't do it. I mean that "saving of the soul" which some people think the Church's only business. Many a lad whom I have met and seen on the road has been individually converted. Some were even wearing the sign and badge of the Salvation Army whilst they tramped; others had letters of recommendation from ministers of all denominations; and the pity of it is, these lads, having been converted once to some sort of love, hope, and ideal, are now by the evil surroundings into which they are unwillingly thrust being reconverted into hate, despair, and hopelessness!

But let those who think the Church's first and only work to be the saving of lost souls get themselves with all speed into old clothes and old clouts, and no money in their pockets withal, and tramp, seeking for work; let them spend this night, and the next, and the next following in a mixed common lodging-house. Or if they cannot beg the needful for this, let them tramp the streets all night, shivering, exhausted, starved, tired out. Let them do this all week—but for one short week—and try to feel, as the tramp does feel, it MAY go on for ever!—and then they will either gain something of the hilarious mockery and blasphemy of the tramp towards all well-filled, well-fatted Christian Churches and souls, or indeed, in contrition and bitterness of mind for the past, know that Christ's work is still, as ever, to give meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, lodging to the stranger, clothes to the ragged, care to the sick, and life-giving work to all; and with work, and only with work, Hope, Hope, Hope—glad Morning-Star of a brighter day—for all earth's lost.

And yet as Churches we can do much—nay, we can do more than all, and we should, did we but leave out the spirit of bitterness and party strife and welcome and foster the marvellously increasing social aspirations of our age with fitting faith and hope. Every right man, surely every Christian man, must be an optimist. Let the optimism in us out, and it will multiply. Every Church should have its social

study class in an entirely non-party spirit. Why may not Conservative, Liberal, and Socialist equally strive, each most sincerely, for the welfare of all? There might well be an emigration fund in each parish. Select some needy one next winter, feed him and train him and send him forth in the spring to the new and broader lands beyond the seas. Keep social problems to the fore, and for all local, ecclesiastical, municipal, and Parliamentary positions put in the best, biggest, sanest men, men who will think not so much according to the mere money value of the market, but in the higher value of the nation's manhood. For that which is morally right shall be seen not to be economically wrong in the end.

Especially must we remember that it is the duty of the whole Church to lead the way—to make the attempt—to devise means whereby the banished and outcast be not expelled for ever from wholesome life. Every county should have its labour colony, a city of refuge, whereunto he who had fallen in the strife of life might flee, and where he would always be received with strong arms of love.

Such a colony would be the home missionary work of the Church, continually calling for devoted lives to be given to the most difficult service of uplifting the fallen by comrade work and the tonic of hopeful love. A "great heart" must be at the head, the greatest heart that can be found, with a wise head, moreover. The thing most precious in this colony, nay, the only thing of priceless cost, will be Love, that love which inspires, which believes, which trusts, which laughs at impossibilities. We are not hindered by lack of money, but by lack of love. Such a colony in each county, with its ever-open door of hope, would give new heart and courage to every city pastor and slum worker. Such a colony would give new heart to true and worthy town councillors, members of watch committees, and police officers. The money which is now wasted in supplying useless casual wards and extra police cells would soon be voted hither; the work, as it became manifestly worthy, would meet with the generous support of the town and city fathers, and the lavish gifts of those hearts which ever open noiselessly at the magic touch of Love. Such a colony would provide the incentive, would give the basis by hard-earned experience, and would train the workers for further linking-up efforts by the local and national authorities themselves. And, be it known far and wide, this is the way in which Germany has so nearly solved her out-of-work and vagrant problem. The good men of the Church led the way, the State wisely watched, supported, and followed.

For surely we all recognise that the great problem of unemployment, vagrancy, and degrading destitution is chiefly a collective and national work. We can only deal with the whole difficulty through legislation. It is the business of a Christian people to see that their laws growingly reflect the developing Spirit of Christ in their midst. The social conscience of England is aroused to-day as never before, in spite of all our lethargy; but our quickened conscience needs to be embodied in action, in legislation, in a new attitude towards the whole poor of our land.

Our only national remedies at the present are the tramp wards, the workhouses, the gaols, the asylums of our land, and a whole mass of blundering, unorganised charity.

Why are these expensive national methods of dealing with destitution useless? Because their only aim is to make the life of the tramp as uncomfortable, wretched, and full of disgrace as possible. Our present methods neither try to prevent the drift downwards by standing by men who are seeking work, nor to lift up the fallen and give them a new start. The spirit, method, and aim of our present treatment of the poor is wrong, unscientific, and unchristian.

What, then, must we do? We must stop the drift downward. We must stand by men who are out of work. We must stop the vain and degrading tramping on the road to seek for work. What is our telephone, telegraph, and postal service for but to be used? And what is Government, with all its wonderful machinery, for, but to protect the best interests of the whole of the people governed?

Let periods of slackness of trade, and unemployment, be used as golden opportunities for the improvement of the workers. Let men be drafted off into technical schools, agricultural training colleges, and other like institutions, to further and complete their education as mechanics, plumbers, farm labourers and citizens. Then, when the demand for labour quickens, the men would go forth the better, the more intelligent, and capable for the well-used period of unemployment from ordinary business life.

This would stop the creation of a criminal class such as we see to-day, and would in largest measure stop the drift downward.

With a like spirit of kind, firm hopefulness we must, by magistrates' order, clear the roads and streets of the whole vagrant, vagabond class of beggars, loafers and wastrels. We must classify them. We must clothe them and feed them and doctor and heal their poor bodies, and their poorer souls also, with the glad gospel of Hope. Teach them a

trade. Create new good habits of work and living, and as they regain strength of will and strength of body once more they, too, will gladly take their new-found places as honoured citizens of our land.

We welcome the new spirit moving in our midst, as evidenced by the National Labour Bureaux, which should eventually, when trusted both by masters and men, prove of greatest value, especially if supported by a wise scheme of compulsory insurance against unemployment; as evidenced also by such a noble and sorely needed voluntary movement as the newly-organised National Association for Women's Lodging-Homes, and the long tried efforts of the Church and Salvation Army. There is room for all, there is need for co-operation and co-ordination amongst all, but there is no room for a party spirit which only pulls to pieces the efforts of others because they are the attempts of men of another political or religious creed.

The aim and object being clear:—(1) To stop the drifting; (2) To sweep the drifted off the streets and restore them to usefulness; (3) To employ every Englishman in honourable toil. This object being clear, we could do it! for it can be done. My purpose is to arouse men to this great duty, to which we are all called—the duty of making destitution and beggary to cease for ever; to tell men *God* calls them to this work, and that it is not beyond the wit and power of *men* to accomplish it. This is God's call to-day! "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you."

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# WHERE SHALL SHE LIVE ?

## THE HOMELESSNESS OF THE WOMAN WORKER

WRITTEN FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
WOMEN'S LODGING-HOMES

BY

MARY HIGGS

AUTHOR OF "GLIMPSES INTO THE ABYSS," "FIVE DAYS AND NIGHTS AS  
A TRAMP," ETC

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UNEMPLOYED," ETC.

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